

role in solving the Iraqi issue. We cannot bypass the political process. Iraq should be in a position to solve Iraqi problems. We welcome any effort that could enhance the democratic reality in Iraq and protect the constitutional role of that state.

We have gone a long way to establish a democratic and pluralistic society in Iraq. We have given a great deal of sacrifice toward achieving that objective. We cherish all the sacrifices that took place for the liberation and the freedom of Iraq, sacrifices by the Iraqi people, as well as friendly nations, and on top of that list, sacrifices by the Americans. We have now an elected government in Iraq, a government that it is so determined to combat both violence and terror, a government that it is—strongly believes in the unity of that government and of that country and the society, a government that deals and will deal with all the sources of terrorism regardless where they come from.

We will work very hard and seek all forms of cooperation at the international level and the regional level in order to defeat terrorism, that it is trying to use Iraq as a base in order to sabotage the future of that nation.

Thank you very much, Mr. President, for allowing me this opportunity to meet with you. I would like to take this opportunity also to thank the American people and their sympathy toward Iraq, those who helped Iraq to get rid of a brutal dictatorship and to enjoy freedom and liberties.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:26 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq. Chairman Hakim spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks on the Resignation of John R. Bolton as United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations

December 4, 2006

The President. I received the resignation of Ambassador John Bolton. I accepted; I'm not happy about it. I think he deserved to be confirmed. And the reason why I think

he deserved to be confirmed is because I know he did a fabulous job for the country.

And I want to thank you and Gretchen for serving in a very important position, and doing so in a way that a lot of Americans really appreciate, John. We're going to miss you in this administration. You've been a stalwart defender of freedom and peace. You've been strong in your advocacy for human rights and human dignity. You've done everything that can be expected for an Ambassador.

And I accept your letter, and I wish you and Gretchen all the very best.

Ambassador Bolton. Many thanks.

The President. Thank you. Thanks for serving.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:49 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gretchen Bolton, wife of Ambassador Bolton. The Office of the Press Secretary also made available Ambassador Bolton's letter of resignation.

Statement on the Resignation of John R. Bolton as United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations

December 4, 2006

It is with deep regret that I accept John Bolton's decision to end his service in the administration as Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations when his commission expires.

Over a year ago, I appointed Ambassador Bolton because I knew he would represent America's values and effectively confront difficult problems at the United Nations. He served his country with extraordinary dedication and skill, assembling coalitions that addressed some of the most consequential issues facing the international community. During his tenure, he articulately advocated the positions and values of the United States and advanced the expansion of democracy and liberty.

Ambassador Bolton led the successful negotiations that resulted in unanimous Security Council resolutions regarding North Korea's military and nuclear activities. He built consensus among our allies on the need for

Iran to suspend the enrichment and reprocessing of uranium. His efforts to promote the cause of peace in Darfur resulted in a peace-keeping commitment by the United Nations. He made the case for United Nations reform because he cares about the institution and wants it to become more credible and effective.

I am deeply disappointed that a handful of United States Senators prevented Ambassador Bolton from receiving the up-or-down vote he deserved in the Senate. They chose to obstruct his confirmation, even though he enjoys majority support in the Senate and even though their tactics will disrupt our diplomatic work at a sensitive and important time. This stubborn obstructionism ill serves our country and discourages men and women of talent from serving their Nation.

I thank John Bolton for the dedication and skill with which he performed his duties, and his wife, Gretchen, and daughter, Jennifer Sarah, for their support as Ambassador Bolton served his country. All Americans owe John Bolton their gratitude for a job well done.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also made available Ambassador Bolton's letter of resignation.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary of Defense-Designate Robert M. Gates

December 5, 2006

The President. Good morning. I just had a breakfast with my nominee to be the Secretary of Defense, Bob Gates. Bob Gates will be a fine Secretary of Defense. I appreciate the fact that he's getting a hearing today in the United States Senate. I hope for a speedy confirmation so he can get sworn in and get to work.

Those who wear the uniform know they'll have a friend in Bob Gates in the Defense Department. He admires our military; he respects those who have volunteered to serve our country. He's going to do an excellent job for us.

Again, Bob, I thank you for agreeing to serve.

Robert M. Gates. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you very much.

The President. Best of luck up there on Capitol Hill. Good luck to you.

Mr. Gates. Thank you.

The President. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:48 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Executive Order 13416— Strengthening Surface Transportation Security December 5, 2006

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and to strengthen the security of the Nation's surface transportation systems and thereby enhance the protection of the people, property, and territory of the United States of America against terrorist attacks, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Policy. The security of our Nation's surface transportation systems is a national priority, vital to our economy, and essential to the security of our Nation. Federal, State, local, and tribal governments, the private sector, and the public share responsibility for the security of surface transportation. It is the policy of the United States to protect the people, property, and territory of the United States by facilitating the implementation of a comprehensive, coordinated, and efficient security program to protect surface transportation systems within and adjacent to the United States against terrorist attacks.

Sec. 2. Definitions. For purposes of this order:

(a) "agencies" means those executive departments enumerated in 5 U.S.C. 101, independent establishments as defined by 5 U.S.C. 104(1), government corporations as defined by 5 U.S.C. 103(1), and the United States Postal Service;

(b) "Secretary" means the Secretary of Homeland Security;

(c) "security guideline" means any security-related guidance that the Secretary recommends, for implementation on a voluntary basis, to enhance the security of surface transportation;